AVATAR

The Last Airbender

BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER ONE: "The Avatar State"

Written by:

Aaron Ehasz
Elizabeth Welch Ehasz
Tim Hedrick
John O'Bryan

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ACT I

AANG'S DREAM

A series of quick cuts from Aang's experiences going into the Avatar state. Intercut with shots of normal Aang, as if he is watching himself in the Avatar state -- he looks horrified.

From episode 101: Aang, swallowed up by the storm, goes under water and goes into the Avatar state, forming the ice around him.

From episode 108: Aang as Roku blasts the Temple.

From episode 120: Aang/the Ocean Spirit destroys the Fire Nation fleet. (Perhaps a shot of terrified on-lookers.)

Aang on the mountain in episode 103: Sokka and Katara are caught in the wind, fearing for their lives. We see Katara's face up close, paralyzed with fear.

INT. WATER TRIBE SHIP - SLEEPING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Aang jumps from his hammock, gasping for breath. As it sinks in he's okay, he SIGHS and starts up the ladder to the deck. We see Katara wake and watch him go.

EXT. WATER TRIBE SHIP - DECK - NIGHT

Aang walks to the ship's railing and looks out over the quiet moon-lit water. He turns and sees Sokka curled up asleep on the deck. Aang looks up at the full moon, then smiles knowingly at Sokka.

KATARA (V.O.)
Aang.

Aang makes the "Shh!" sign, pointing out Sokka still asleep in the moonlight. Aang motions to her and they go to another part of the deck.

KATARA (cont'd)
Do you want to talk about it?

AANG
Nah, just a nightmare.

She nods. After a beat.

AANG (cont'd)
I was in the Avatar state... but I was outside my body watching myself. It was scary... I was scary.

She puts a comforting hand on his shoulder.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WATER TRIBE SHIP - DECK - THE NEXT DAY

Aang loads some stuff on Appa. Sokka and Katara are also ready to go. PAKKU emerges from below deck carrying a big sack. The kids line up to say goodbye to Pakku.

PAKKU
Katara, I want you to have this...

He pulls a decorated whale-skin bladder from the sack.

PAKKU (cont'd)
This amulet contains water from the spirit oasis. The water has unique properties -- don't lose it.

8 She hugs him, obviously touched. With tears welling, Katara 8
climbs on board Appa. Pakku moves on to Aang. He reaches in his sack, and produces a box full of scrolls.

PAKKU (cont'd)
Aang, these scrolls will help you master Waterbending. But remember, they're no substitute for a real master.

10 Pakku indicates Katara. Aang accepts the scrolls and bows to 10
Pakku. Aang climbs aboard Appa. Sokka is next in line.

PAKKU (cont'd)
Sokka...

Sokka looks expectantly at Pakku's sack -- his eyes wide.

PAKKU (cont'd)
Take care, son.

He pats Sokka on the back and moves on without giving him anything. Sokka makes a funny "been-dissed" expression, then climbs aboard Appa. Pakku addresses them all.

PAKKU (cont'd)
Fly straight to the Earth Kingdom base to the east of here. General Fong will provide you with an escort to Omashu. There you'll be safe to begin your Earthbending training with King Bumi.

AANG
Appa, Yip-yip.

KATARA
So hi to Gran gran for me.

Appa takes off as Katara waves goodbye. The ship's Waterbenders synchronize their moves onto the surface of the ocean, causing the ship to speed away like a power boat.

INT. RESORT - DAY

A tanned, shirtless Uncle Iroh is getting his back rubbed by a huge, hulking masseur.

UNCLE
Aaah... this is what I've been missing. Who knew floating on a piece of driftwood for three weeks with no food or water and sea vultures waiting to pluck out your liver could make one so tense?

WIDEN TO ZUKO, who is sitting in a dark corner of the room, looking despondent. Uncle gets up to speak with Zuko.

UNCLE (cont'd)
I see... It's the anniversary, isn't it?

Zuko doesn't say anything for a beat.

ZUKO
Three years ago today I was banished... I lost it all.
(a beat)
I want it back!

Uncle nods.

ZUKO (cont'd)
I want the Avatar, I want my honor, my throne... I want my father not to think I'm worthless.

UNCLE
I'm sure he doesn't -- why would he banish you if he didn't care?

Zuko stands and slowly trudges out the door, shaking his head. Uncle turns to the masseurs.

UNCLE (cont'd)
That came out wrong, didn't it?

EXT. AZULA'S SHIP - DAY

A sleek, richly-appointed Fire Nation royal sloop. A group of FIRE NATION SOLDIERS is lined up at inspection. A beautiful fourteen year-old, PRINCESS AZULA, addresses the troops with the supreme confidence that is her birthright. She stalks up and down the row of soldiers, looking them over one by one.

PRINCESS AZULA
My brother and my uncle have disgraced the Fire Lord and brought shame on all of us. You may have mixed feelings about attacking members of the royal family. I understand. But I assure you -- if you hesitate...

She looks one of her soldiers right in the eye.

PRINCESS AZULA (cont'd)
I will not hesitate to bring you down. Dismissed.

The troops run off. The SHIP'S CAPTAIN strides up to her.

CAPTAIN
Princess, I'm afraid the tides will not allow us to bring the ship in to port before nightfall.

Azula looks up at him, innocently.

PRINCESS AZULA
I'm sorry, Captain, but I do not know much about the tides. Can you explain something to me?

CAPTAIN
Of course, Your Highness.

PRINCESS AZULA
Do the tides command this ship?

CAPTAIN
Uh, I'm afraid I don't understand.

PRINCESS AZULA
You said the tides would not allow us to bring the ship in. Do the tides command this ship?

CAPTAIN
No, Princess.

PRINCESS AZULA
And if I were to have you thrown overboard, would the tides think twice about smashing you against the rocky shore?

CAPTAIN
No, Princess.

PRINCESS AZULA
Well then maybe you should worry less about the tides, who've already made up their mind about killing you, and worry more about me, who's still mulling it over.

She smiles at him. He swallows hard.

CAPTAIN
I'll pull us in.

He runs off to pilot the ship in to the shore.

EXT. SKY - APPA'S BACK - DAY

Flying over the ocean towards the coast, Sokka spots a coastal fortress, an Earth Kingdom base.

SOKKA
There it is!

Appa banks towards it. Moments later, they have a great aerial view of the impressive Earth Kingdom facility. It's a fortress with a large circular "yard" area, surrounded by high walls. At the center of the circle is a singular tall tower, overlooking everything. The top of the tower provides a makeshift landing platform where GENERAL FONG, and a few of his top lieutenants stand in RIGID SALUTE poses, welcoming our gang. Below, troops and military equipment have gathered in the yard and also stand at attention.

EXT. MAP ROOM TOWER - PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS

Appa lands on the platform. The General and the others finish their salute.

GENERAL FONG
Welcome, Avatar Aang! I am General Fong. And welcome to all of you, great heroes! Appa, Momo -- brave Sokka! The mighty Katara...

Katara turns to Sokka.

KATARA
(pleased)
Mighty Katara? I like that.

SOKKA
Not bad, not bad.

He bows. When he rises from his bow, he tosses a blue sphere into the air above him, then causes the sphere to explode with an Earthbending move -- it shatters in a dazzling display of sparkling blue dust, in an effect not unlike fireworks. After his signal, a ceremonial welcome begins below in the yard. Earthbenders launch larger colorful spheres into the sky, which they then shatter in an amazing display...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MAP ROOM TOWER - LATER

The map room (which is also the general’s office) is inside the top of the tower. It’s a round room with large windows overlooking the yard and the expansive view. Aang, Katara, and Sokka find seats while Fong begins pacing before the maps, in a manner reminiscent of Zhao in 1.03.

GENERAL FONG
Avatar Aang, we were all amazed at the stories of how you single-handedly wiped out an entire Fire Navy fleet at the North Pole. I can’t imagine what it feels like to wield such devastating power -- it’s an awesome responsibility.

AANG
(smiles)
I try not to think about it too much.

GENERAL FONG
Avatar, you're ready to face the Fire Lord now.

Everyone is shocked at this suggestion.

AANG
What? No, I'm not...

KATARA
Aang still needs to master all four elements.

GENERAL FONG
Why? With the kind of power he possesses -- power enough to destroy hundreds of battle ships in a matter of minutes -- he could defeat the Fire Lord now!

SOKKA
But sir, the thing is, Aang can only do those things when he's in the Avatar state.

AANG
See, it's this special state where--

GENERAL FONG
I'm well aware -- your eyes and tattoos glow, and you're able to summon unbelievable power.

He walks over to a large map and indicates a path as he speaks.

GENERAL FONG (cont'd)
Without you, we'd be slaughtered before we even reached their shores. But with you leading the way -- as the ultimate weapon -- we could cut a swath right through to the heart of the Fire Nation.

AANG
Right, but I don't know how to get in or out of the Avatar State, much less what to do once I'm there...

The General smiles.

GENERAL FONG
So it's decided, then? I'll help you figure out how to get into the Avatar State -- and then you'll face your destiny.

KATARA
No, nothing's decided! We already have a plan -- Aang's pursuing his destiny, his way.

The General looks to Aang.

GENERAL FONG
Well, while you take your time learning the elements, the war goes on. May I show you something?

He leads Aang to a window, points down into a courtyard where a number of soldiers wait in line at an infirmary.

GENERAL FONG (cont'd)
That's the infirmary, and those soldiers are the lucky ones -- they came back. Every day the Fire Nation takes lives -- people are dying, Aang. You could end it now.

The General turns away.

GENERAL FONG (cont'd)
Think about it.

Off Aang's troubled reaction -- he is clearly torn up.

EXT. AZULA'S SHIP - SUNSET

Azula stands in the middle of the deck, about to begin an elaborate Firebending move -- in fact, Firebending's highest level move. Azula's trainers, two elderly female twins named CHO and LO, stand off to the side, watching.

Azula takes a deep breath, then launches into her move. This move has a distinct "wind up" sequence in which Azula gathers energy/chi -- which she then delivers in a devastating blow, releasing a focused burst of white-hot lightning from her hands with a loud THUNDER CRACK.

Azula finishes exactly where she started, in set position. A strand of hair falls into her eyes. She scowls at it.

CHO
Almost perfect.

LO
One hair out of place.

AZULA
Almost isn’t good enough.

INT. RESORT - THAT MOMENT

Uncle, whose eyes are closed taking a nap, hears the SOUND OF DISTANT THUNDER. His eyes suddenly open.

INT. MAP ROOM TOWER - NIGHT

General Fong sits at a desk, going over battle plans. Aang peeks his head in.

AANG
General Fong?

Fong looks up and smiles.

GENERAL FONG
Come in, Aang. Have you thought about our discussion?

Aang nods.

AANG
I’m in. I’ll fight the Fire Lord.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT II

EXT. ESTABLISHING - EARTH KINGDOM BASE - NIGHT

INT. GUESTS' QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Katara and Sokka sit by a fire with Momo and Appa. Aang walks up, looking a little nervous.

AANG
I told the general I'd help him. By going into the Avatar state.

KATARA
Aang, no! This is not the right way!

SOKKA
Why not? Remember when he took out the Fire Nation Navy? He was incredible!

Katara ignores him.

KATARA
Aang, there's a right way to do this. Practice, study, and discipline.

SOKKA
Or just glow it up and stomp that Fire Lord!

KATARA
If you two meatheads want to throw away everything we've worked for, fine -- go ahead and "glow it up."

She storms off, fed up with both of them. Aang follows after her for a few steps.

AANG
Katara! I'm just being realistic. I don't have time to do this the right way!

INT. INFIRMARY - DAY

General Fong has taken Aang to an Earth Kingdom PHYSICIAN. Katara and Sokka look on as the doctor hands a cup of hot liquid to Aang.

PHYSICIAN
This rare Chi-enhancing tea is a natural stimulant. In an ordinary warrior it improves strength and energy ten-fold. In you, it may induce the Avatar state.

AANG
Ten-fold energy, huh?

Aang Airbends the tea, cooling it off. Then he chugs it.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. INFIRMARY - MINUTES LATER

Aang is now manically pacing around the infirmary.

AANG
(ultra-fast babbling)
Is it working? Is it working? I CAN'T TELL, somebody tell me if I'm in the Avatar state because I don't have a good view of myself... AM I TALKING TOO LOUD?

Sokka and Katara look at the General skeptically.

SOKKA
I guess he could talk the Fire Lord to death.

Katara shakes her head and rolls her eyes.

INT. GUESTS' QUARTERS - LATER

SOKKA
Maybe I can shock you into the Avatar state.

Reveal that Aang is sitting on the floor blindfolded. He gives a thumbs up to Sokka.

AANG
I love surprises.

Katara removes Aang's blindfold. Reveal Sokka whose head has been replaced by Momo's. Sokka waves his arms around crazily as Momo screeches.

MOMO
(LOUD, SHRILL CHITTERING)

AANG
(STARTLED YELP)

Aang recovers and looks down at his tatoos.

AANG (cont'd)
Still not glowing.

EXT. TEMPLE - LATER

Aang is now wearing a Water Tribe fur, bedecked with colorful beads, over his monk's clothing. A Firebender's metal belt with studs and spikes drapes nearly to his ankles, and an over-sized Earth Kingdom helmet festooned with ostrich-like feathers and a variety of animal horns, sits askew over one ear. A SHAMAN stands before a large cauldron.

SHAMAN
You are wearing a ceremonial piece of clothing from each of the bending nations. Now I will join the four elements into one!

The shaman, in quick succession, pours a pitcher of water, dumps a platter of dirt and rocks, uses bellows to blow air in, then dumps a handful of flash powder into the cauldron.

SHAMAN (cont'd)
Water! Earth! Fire! Air! Four elements together as one!

Then he empties the cauldron onto Aang's head.

AANG
This is just mud.

Beat.

SHAMAN
So do you feel anything?

Aang has a hilarious expression even though he is dripping with disgusting mud.

GENERAL FONG
(fiercely determined)
We have to find a way.

EXT. RESORT - DAY

Uncle Iroh and Zuko enter their resort-style hut. Uncle arranges a lot of pretty SEA SHELLS.

UNCLE
Look at these magnificent shells. I'll enjoy these keepsakes for years to come.

Uncle moves towards their belongings, but Zuko blocks him.

ZUKO
We don't need any more useless things! You forget we have to carry everything ourselves now --

AZULA (O.S.)
Hello, Brother. Uncle.

Startled, Zuko is poised, ready for attack. Uncle bristles. Azula steps out of a shadow.

ZUKO
What are <u>you</u> doing here?!

AZULA
In <u>my</u> country we exchange a pleasant 'hello' before asking questions. Have you become uncivilized so soon, Zu-zu?

ZUKO
(sputtering)
Don't call me that!

UNCLE
(cold, to Azula)
To what do we owe this honor?

AZULA
Hmm, must be a family trait: Both of you so quick to get to the point!

She extends a dagger of a fingernail and pierces one of Uncle's shells, splintering it. Uncle is clearly pissed, but controls himself.

AZULA (cont'd)
(to Zuko)
I've come with a message from home: Father's changed his mind. Family is suddenly very important to him. He's heard rumors of plans to overthrow him -- treacherous plots.
(looking him straight in the eye)
(MORE)

AZULA(cont'd)
Family are the only ones you can really trust.

She waits a beat for his reaction.

AZULA (cont'd)
(delivering the lie)
Father regrets your banishment. He wants you home.

Zuko is emotionless.

AZULA (cont'd)
Did you hear me? You should be happy. Excited. Grateful. I just gave you great news.

UNCLE
I am sure your brother simply needs a moment --

AZULA
(sharp)
Don't interrupt, Uncle!
(to Zuko)
I still haven't heard my thank you. I'm not a messenger. I didn't have to come all this way.

Zuko looks as if he's in a dream.

ZUKO
(dazed)
Father regrets... He wants me back?

We see a glimmer of hope in Zuko's eyes. Azula stifles a smile. This was way too easy.

AZULA
I can see you need time to take this in. I'll come to call on you tomorrow. Good evening.

With this she's gone.

EXT. MAP ROOM TOWER - PLATFORM - SUNSET

Katara watches Aang for a moment. He is sitting on the edge of the platform dangling his feet over the side. He's up to something: Airbending and chuckling. Some little base-brats on the ground below are chasing something that keeps jumping up and spinning away under a hat, but when they look underneath, there's nothing there! They shriek with delight.

Aang hears Katara approaching and turns. Katara stands there awkwardly for a beat.

KATARA
Can we talk about something?

AANG
Sure.

Aang pats next to him. She sits down, but can’t start.

KATARA
Do you remember when we were at the Air Temple and you found Monk Gyatso’s skeleton?

Aang nods.

KATARA (cont’d)
It must have been so horrible and traumatic for you. I saw you get so upset that you weren’t even you anymore.

Aang squirms a little.

KATARA (cont’d)
I’m not saying the Avatar state doesn’t have incredible -- and helpful -- power, but you have to understand, for the people who love you, watching you be in that much rage and pain is really scary...

A beat.

AANG
I’m really glad you told me that.
(beat)
But I still need to do this.

KATARA
I don’t understand.

AANG
No, you don’t. Every day more and more people die. I’m already a hundred years late! Defeating the Fire Lord is the only way to stop this war! I have to try it.

The sun goes down.

KATARA
(small)
I can't watch you do this to yourself.
(beat)
I'm not coming tomorrow.

She gets up.

KATARA (cont'd)
Goodnight.

AANG
Goodnight.

EXT. RESORT - NIGHT

Zuko beams, but Uncle is still wary.

ZUKO
We're going home! After three long years... it's unbelievable!

UNCLE
It is unbelievable. I have never known my brother to "regret" anything.

ZUKO
Did you listen to Azula? Father's realized how important family is to him. He <u>cares</u> about me.

UNCLE
<u>I</u> care about you! And if Ozai wants you back, well, I think it may not be for the reasons you imagine.

There's a beat as this sinks in. Zuko fumes.

ZUKO
(exploding)
You don't know how my father feels about me! You don't know anything!

Zuko looks at Iroh with the sting of betrayal in his eyes. Uncle knows he's gone too far and backpedals.

UNCLE
Zuko... I only meant that in our family, things are not always what they seem.

ZUKO
I think you are exactly what you seem: a lazy, mistrustful, shallow old man who has always been jealous of his brother.

Zuko storms out. Uncle hangs his head.

AANG'S DREAM - NIGHT

The SOUND OF LOUD WIND. This is Aang's 103 Avatar state, entirely from his point of view. It is loud and scary. He sees Gyatso's bones. He has memories of Gyatso baking cakes with him, then back to the bones. He sees Katara, now, pleading with him -- we can barely hear her over the loud and pulsating wind. She and Sokka look scared. His POV focuses on Katara's scared face.

INT. GUESTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Aang bolts upright, waking from his dream.

AANG
(quietly)
Sokka. Sokka, wake up.

Sokka barely opens his eyes.

SOKKA
Huh?

AANG
I don't think we should be trying to bring on the Avatar state.

Sokka thinks about this for a second.

SOKKA
You sure?

AANG
Yes.

Sokka nods.

SOKKA
Okay.

Aang is a little surprised.

AANG
Do you think the General will be mad?

Sokka shrugs.

SOKKA
What can he say? You're the Avatar. Who knows better than you?

Aang smiles. Sokka lies back down and goes to sleep. Aang relaxes and goes back to bed.

EXT. COASTAL PATH - NEXT MORNING

Prince Zuko is walking alone on the trail down to the Earth Kingdom coastline. Suddenly, Uncle Iroh runs out of the bushes to catch him.

UNCLE
(winded)
Wait... don't leave without me!

Zuko beams with joy -- an expression we have never seen on his face.

ZUKO
Uncle! You've changed your mind.

UNCLE
Family sticks together, right?

Zuko throws his arms around Uncle.

ZUKO
We're finally going home!

Zuko looks at Iroh, who forces a smile. But as soon as Zuko turns around, Uncle's smile transforms into a look of grave concern.

INT. MAP ROOM TOWER - NEXT DAY

General Fong sits at his desk. Some Earth Nation soldiers stand behind him. Aang and Sokka stand in front of the desk, and through the tower's windows behind them, we can see soldiers in the practice yard below.

AANG
The thing is, I don't think we'll ever be able to trigger it on purpose. So I guess that's it.

GENERAL FONG
Sure I can't change your mind?

AANG
I'm sure. I can only reach the Avatar state when I'm in genuine danger.

General Fong gets up and walks over to Aang, rubbing his chin thoughtfully.

GENERAL FONG
I see. I was afraid you'd say that.

He uses Earthbending to sucker punch Aang in the chest, knocking him back through the windows and down to the training ground below. Sokka watches in horror.

SOKKA
Aang!

General Fong's men immediately grab Sokka. Fong leaps out the window and...

EXT. TRAINING GROUND - CONTINUOUS

...lands next to Aang, bending the ground to cushion his landing. Aang still lies on the ground, shocked. Fong calls out to the men who stand on the training ground.

GENERAL FONG
Men! Attack the Avatar!

Aang looks up at General Fong in terror as we-

END ACT TWO

ACT III

EXT. BASE - DAY

Aang lies on the ground. An Earth Nation soldier on an ostrich horse quickly swoops in and snatches his staff up off the ground. Aang groggily looks up and sees (at least) two of General Fong standing over him.

AANG
What are you doing?!

GENERAL FONG
I believe we are about to get results.

A group of soldiers has gathered around Aang and the general. Four foot soldiers wield long spears. Three cavalry troops ride ostrich-horses -- each with a different, scary Earth Kingdom weapon. Four eight-foot stone coins roll out, each controlled by an Earthbender.

The troops hesitate. They look at Aang, who's clearly not their enemy, and back at the general, confused.

The General fires on Aang, sending a volley of rocks toward him as he jumps and darts, neatly avoiding them, and not fighting back.

AANG
I'm not your enemy! I won't fight you!

EXT. MAP ROOM TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Sokka struggles as two guards hold his arms behind his back. Suddenly, Sokka throws his head backwards, reverse head-butting guard #1 in the face, who lets go of him. Sokka quickly grabs the guard's weapon, and swings its hilt into the other guy's stomach.

Sokka runs to the window, thrusting his head out to see what's happening in the yard. He immediately sees how high up he is -- and the trouble Aang's in below.

EXT. BASE - CONTINUOUS

Aang turns and sees the four giant, stone coins headed right for him. He starts to run away, then just as he's almost crushed, he does a backflip, landing on top of the coin. As he runs on top of the coin, Fong Earthbends a boulder at him that narrowly misses and slams into the side of Aang's coin. Aang leaps to the next coin in the line, but the one he was on before starts to topple over from Fong's blast.

The coins go down one after the other like dominoes, with Aang leaping from coin to coin as they fall, finally ending up back on the ground.

As he hits the ground, two ostrich riders come speeding toward him swinging flail/morning star weapons (or more Asian equivalent). Aang blocks the swinging morning stars with some defensive Airbending. One of the chains from the weapons is knocked back into the face of its wielder, knocking him out. The other flail is deflected and tangled around the other ostrich's leg, sending the bird and its rider tumbling to the ground. (In a way that is comical and humane.)

The Earthbenders have gotten their coins back up, and one of them rolls right at Aang. Aang leaps over it and high into the air -- but another Earthbender creates a ramp out of the ground for his rapidly moving coin, launching it into the air at Aang. The coin flies horizontally like a frisbee, heading straight for Aang's head. Aang lies down on top of the other (rolling) coin to avoid getting hit. But since the coin is rolling, he soon finds himself heading toward the ground to be crushed. He manages to roll off just in time.

Before he can pick himself up off the ground, he sees two coins rapidly spinning toward him, one on either side. He can't get out of the way in time -- just as they come smashing together, Aang leaps up. It looks like Aang has been smooshed, but we FREEZE and track around to a side view of the coins to see Aang stretched out flat through the holes in the coins.

The ACTION RESTARTS as Fong sends another boulder flying at Aang. Aang jumps out of the coin hole as the boulder hits the coins, exploding them.

GENERAL FONG
You can't run forever!

AANG
You can't fight forever!

At the top of the tower, we see Sokka emerge from the window, a rope tied around his waist. He begins rappelling down the side of the tower.

EXT. AZULA'S SHIP - DAY

Uncle and Zuko approach the long gangplank of Azula's ship moored in a deep cove. As Zuko and Uncle get close, the guards step aside and salute. Suddenly Azula appears on the ship, smiling and coming to greet them.

AZULA
Brother! Uncle! Welcome!

Zuko brushes past the guards, clearly pleased and relieved to be boarding a Royal Army ship again. He goes to greet Azula. Uncle is cautious however. He eyes the soldiers with their weapons, and warily walks up the gangplank. He watches Azula laying it on thick with Zuko.

AZULA (cont'd)
I'm so glad you decided to come!

She hugs him, then turns to Iroh and bows, smiling. Uncle bows back, keeping an eye on Azula. The captain strides up to Azula.

CAPTAIN
Are we ready to depart, Your Highness?

AZULA
Set our course for <u>home</u>, Captain.

ZUKO
(to himself)
Home.

The captain turns and shouts to his crew.

CAPTAIN
You heard the Princess! Raise the anchors! We're taking the prisoners home--

The Captain catches himself, but too late. The word "prisoners" hangs in the air. Everyone freezes -- the ruse is up! We have a Sergio Leone moment: tight shots of our characters' eyes as Uncle and Zuko realize they've been trapped, Azula gives her captain a furious look, and the captain realizes his time is up.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)
Your Highness... I...

Azula angrily turns toward the captain and blasts him with a huge explosion knocking him offscreen. Seeing his opportunity, Uncle turns and blasts the guards behind him off the gangplank. Zuko ignores him and strides toward Azula, furious.

ZUKO
You lied to me!

Azula smiles and shrugs.

AZULA
Like I’ve never done that before.

Zuko launches into an impressive Firebending sequence, fighting with all the fury of his wounded pride. Azula expertly and gracefully parries and dodges each attack.

INT. GUESTS’ QUARTERS - DAY

Katara is sitting on her cot, deep in thought. She hears a BOOM, and can hear some of what is going on outside.

KATARA
I wonder what crazy thing they’re trying now.

MOMO
(CHITTERS)

KATARA
Maybe we should just make sure Aang’s okay.

She gets up.

EXT. BASE - DAY

Aang continues to duck and dodge attacks. Katara walks onto the training ground with Momo on her shoulder.

KATARA
What’s going on?!

Sokka reaches the ground and runs toward Katara.

SOKKA
The general’s gone crazy! He’s trying to force Aang into the Avatar state.

Sokka immediately jumps into the fray, swinging his club. Katara follows.

Katara bends water out of an ostrich-horse trough. She creates her water whip and swings it around, chopping the tops off of the footsoldiers’ spears.

Sokka rushes an Earthbender with his club raised. The Earthbender turns and quickly redirects one of the coins he is rolling at Sokka. Sokka turns to run from the oncoming coin but is headed straight for an ostrich-horse rider.

Seeing the coin coming, the ostrich-horse jerks to avoid it, throwing its rider.

SOKKA (cont'd)
Good bird-horse-thingy...

He tentatively mounts it.

Meanwhile, General Fong steps in front of Katara. Katara swings her whip at Fong, but he bends a cloud of dry, powdery earth up in front of him, and Katara's whip is absorbed. Fong and Aang make eye contact.

GENERAL FONG
Maybe you can avoid me, but she can't.

He performs an elaborate bending move that sucks Katara slowly into the earth, stopping at her knees.

KATARA
I can't move!

AANG
Don't hurt her!

Aang rushes the general and knocks him to the ground.

SOKKA
Katara! No!

We see she is sinking deeper. Aang grabs the general in a threatening way.

AANG
Stop this! You have to let her go!

GENERAL FONG
You could save her if you were in the Avatar state.

AANG
I'm trying, I'm trying!

KATARA
Aang, I'm sinking!

Aang squints his eyes, trying to conjure something with sheer effort. Again, nothing happens. Suddenly, Katara sinks up to her chest in the soft earth. Sokka runs over and tries to pull her out, but it's no use.

GENERAL FONG
I don’t see glowing.

Fong bends the ground again, sending Katara plunging neck deep in it.

KATARA
(fearing for her life)
Please--

AANG
(to general, tears welling)
You don’t need to do this.

GENERAL FONG
Apparently I do.

With that, Katara sinks completely into the ground. Aang turns and looks at Fong with uncontrollable rage. His eyes begin to glow. He slips into the Avatar state.

GENERAL FONG (cont’d)
It worked! It worked!

EXT. AZULA’S SHIP - DAY

Uncle stands at the top of the gangplank, blasting back Azula’s soldiers, who attack him with spears and bending. He yells at Zuko.

UNCLE
Zuko, let’s go!

But Zuko ignores him, locked in an awesome Firebending battle with his sister. However, as we will realize, it is Zuko doing all the attacking as Azula deftly avoids his strikes and waits for a moment of opportunity. Between his strikes, she taunts him and baits him.

AZULA
You know Father blames Iroh for the loss at the North Pole.

He kicks at her head -- she ducks. He tries to sweep her off her feet -- she leaps over him.

AZULA (cont’d)
And he considers you a miserable failure for not finding the Avatar.

He sends another strike straight for her heart, but she rolls to the side to avoid it.

AZULA (cont'd)
Why would he want you back home except to lock you up where you can no longer embarrass him?

Zuko screams with rage as he throws a hard, wild strike at Azula's head. But he overextends himself, which is just what she was waiting for.

Azula hits him with a series of quick Firebending jabs to the body. The blasts pepper him, driving him back. He finally stumbles back onto the deck, gasping for breath. Azula begins the sequence we saw earlier -- we should recognize the unique "wind up."

Iroh, who's finishing off Azula's soldiers, notices Zuko's peril. He grabs a soldier's spear, pushes the man off the gangplank, and runs for his nephew.

Azula smiles as she moves in for the finishing blow. But just as she's about to blast Zuko with lightning, Iroh drives the spear he is carrying into the deck right next to Zuko's head. The spear acts as a lightning rod, directing the lightning away from Zuko and into the deck of the ship.

The deck explodes, throwing Zuko and Iroh off the ship and onto the shore. Azula flies off the other way, into the water. As Azula's soldiers dive into the water to search for her among the floating timbers, Uncle and Zuko make their escape.

EXT. BASE - LATER

Everyone watches in awe as Aang, now in the Avatar state, begins rising up in the air, a tornado pedestal forming beneath him. The General is thrilled.

GENERAL FONG
Avatar Aang, can you hear me?

With a quick wave of his hand, Katara rises up out of the earth, unscratched.

GENERAL FONG (cont'd)
Your friend is safe. It was just a trick to trigger the Avatar state -- and it worked!

There is no response, as all the troops and everyone watch him rise. Suddenly, he drops down to Earth, smacking the ground with an Airbending move that creates the equivalent of a nuclear SHOCKWAVE, rippling outward and sending the General and all the troops tumbling to the edge of the yard.

EXT. SKY - ABOVE THE BASE - THAT MOMENT

Suddenly, Aang realizes he is actually watching himself from above -- as if in third person. He looks down and sees that he is, in fact, hovering on Roku's dragon above the base! Roku himself is piloting the dragon. Aang watches his physical form with fear -- he's still in the Avatar state.

ROKU
It's time you learned...

With a tug on the dragon's reigns, Roku sends them soaring through a tunnel of clouds. On the sides of the cloud tunnel, Aang sees pictures of past Avatars going "all glowy".

ROKU (cont'd)
The Avatar state is a defense mechanism, designed to empower you with the skills and knowledge of all the past Avatars. The glow is the combination of all your past lives, focusing their energy through your body. In the Avatar state you are at your most powerful -- but you are also at your most vulnerable.

AANG
(confused)
What do you mean?

ROKU
If you are killed in the Avatar state... the reincarnation cycle will be broken, and the Avatar will cease to exist.

Aang reacts in horror as he looks down at himself.

EXT. BASE - CONTINUOUS

Aang's eyes begin to lose their glow as he regains full control of his body.

AANG
I'm sorry, Katara. I hope you never have to see me like that again.

The general expresses an odd mixture of relief and excitement.

GENERAL FONG
Ha! Are you joking? That was almost perfect! We just have to find out a way to control you when you're like that!

AANG
You're out of your mind.

GENERAL FONG
(ignoring Aang)
I guess we'll figure it out on the way the Fire Nation...

Suddenly, someone BONKS him on the head with a club, knocking him out cold. It's Sokka, riding an ostrich-horse. The general's Earthbenders and soldiers look at Sokka.

SOKKA
Anybody got a problem with that?

They all shake their heads "no."

CAVALRY TROOP #1
Do you still want an escort to Omashu?

KATARA
I think we're all set.

The kids walk off together.

EXT. RESORT - DAY

Azula and her men have the employees of the resort lined up.

AZULA
(making a decree)
Anyone who harbors these traitors will face the wrath of the Fire Lord.

Azula holds up a WANTED POSTER, depicting Uncle and Zuko, pinching it between her dagger-like nails. The two hulking male masseurs from before see the poster and GASP like women.

AZULA (cont'd)
There will be no place left to hide.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

Uncle and Zuko run panting through the woods, up to the bank of a small river. They stop to look nervously over their shoulders. But all is quiet.

UNCLE
I think we are safe here.

They both lower their eyes and commence taking off their armor. They drop it piece by piece into the river, letting the water take it away. Zuko unsheathes his knife. For a second it glints in sunlight, then in a single quick stroke he brings it toward himself. Uncle looks up in alarm. He sees Zuko's top-knot fly off into the water. Uncle holds out his hand, and Zuko hands him the knife. Uncle bows and lops off his own hair. He lets it fall slowly, strand by strand, as the moving water carries it away.

END OF SHOW